



LOUIS ARMAND 2023-11-21

INCIPIT PARODIA

PHILOFICTION ENTROPOLOGY, POETRY, SIMULATION, STATE, TELEOLOGY

The world is purely parodic... each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form... (Georges Bataille, "The Solar Anus")

Perhaps artificial intelligence (socalled) will finally do for "literature" in the 21st century what photography, in the 19th, did for "painting." No Turing Test need distinguish between them: the dross of mimēsis is always already a product of ideological machinery, one that has never required a pretence to autonomous action, having ruled over the field of representation from ancient times.

From the "beginning," the stakes in this revolution-of-the-word have been nothing less than the mass-manufacture of (political) discourse: the logistics of power.

The “sacred” texts of the monotheisms, plagiarised from Zoroaster, assert as their copyright an entire cosmology. But a monopoly over textual production – which is to say, the production of social meaning – is called utopianism in the hands of “avantgarde” fringe elements. Power is concerned with the fringe only as an object of rhetorical capture, exclusion or isolation, so as to occupy the central ground & to do so as if *by necessity*, which is to say, *automatically & absolutely*.

The invention of writing (in Plato’s retrospective, self-parodying critique) revealed a mechanistic universe in prototype. Its paradox was to represent not the triumph of reason but reason’s ultimate detachment from the human idea. Language would henceforth no longer be reducible to a *technē politikē* but would inscribe the entire field of political possibility (& impossibility). In it, the law of genre would achieve its apotheosis in generic universality.

“Literature” doesn’t exist as a separate region of discourse but is contiguous with discourse in its entirety. It is on account of this that the operations of power are not only *not* alien to it, but are in fact represented at every point within it, such that literature may be considered ideology’s doppelganger.

Teleology is the bildungsroman of power

Beginning with the question of literature: as a general status of writing & an amplification of the relation of writing to power. The aesthetic notion of autonomy *within a system & as an ambivalent relation to that system*. It is literature’s “modernity,” according to a more or less recent intervention by Jacques Rancière, that both emerges from & (thus) reveals this latent *indifference* – the “democratic availability” of writing being a derivation of a capacity inscribed in the figure of a “mute” or “dead letter” circulating within “the rules & hierarchies of representation,” which in turn threaten to produce the collapse of that system & “of the whole regime of meaning.”[1]

Theory, in this formulation, is conceived as the responsibility of a “critique” founded in the radical *ambivalence* of such a literature (by operating within & across the opposed ways “of linking meaning & action” vis-à-vis “the power of framing a common world”). Hence ideology is conceived as literature’s other: that which – by a play of mirrors – appears to contain it (“literature”) within a fictional field (as reflection or illusion), while nevertheless being itself founded upon this very fictionality (as system of universal-hypothesis: the illusion of something that stands *behind the mirror*, operating it).

It’s not for nothing that Derrida insists that “writing & power never work separately, however complex the laws, the system, or the links of their collusion may be... what is astonishing is not writing’s power but what comes, as if from within structure, to limit it by a powerlessness or an effacement.”[2] The apparent inverse of this is the notion that writing “brings about not only a decomposition or destruction,” as Deleuze says, but also “the invention of a new language within language” – that is to say, *within* the field of ideology.

This *invention* (of a language-within-language) is always a *pharmakon*: “a foreign language cannot be hollowed out in one language without language as a whole [ideology as a whole] being... pushed to a limit.”[3] The translation of the one to (or “within”) the other – of writing as literature, theory, ideology – is always a state of being *out-of-joint*, the temporality of a

“struggle,” the (in-) *différance* of a writing that arrives in advance of itself: as the (ambivalent) thought of a to-come; of the ever-displaced future of power's dream of endlessness.

No literary theory without a theory of the state

Two concepts of “literature” thus appear to exist side-by-side & virtually within the same space: that of literature as what Althusser called Ideological State Apparatus & its apparent contrary, literature as subversion of state ideology.[4] The first associates with the “institutionalisation” of culture – though its premise, of course, is that culture, in its essential meaning, is already the discourse of the state; the second associates with the avantgardist notion of autonomy, not as an assertion of “art-for-art's-sake” but as a critical orientation towards the state, founded in a constitutive alienation from it (“art,” here, is that which occurs *despite & exterior to* the operations of the state). One implies a teleological immanence, the other a “dialectical struggle.” One pursues an appearance of homogeneity, the other asserts itself as radically heterogeneous. This, at least, is the dualism most familiar to modern literary theory: a dualism that is as much a product as a description of that relation between language & power otherwise known as cultural modernity.[5]

There are antecedents for this, periods in which literature has been formalised into particular species of ideological object: whether in service to a given ideology, or in opposition to it. In general, whether it chooses to or not, literature has always been bound to considerations of state: we do not need to look very far to find examples. Virtually without exception, the ideological “content” of this subjection is as much formal as topical: subjection to laws of genre, of rhetoric, prosody, grammar, etc., but also of an aesthetic morality that expresses itself through the exclusion of polysemy, ambiguity, ambivalence, strange metaphors & other deviations from a semantics of “truth.” The archetype for this is no doubt Plato's *Republic*, itself an illustration of a literature at the service of the state: its enemy is the poetry of “unreason.”

What occurs, then, in this zone of a between-two-literatures? The one, a formalised expression of a philosophy of state, of reason, of a pure hermeneutic; the other its contrary, or rather its *adversary*. There is a sense in which what we call “comparative literature” must imply, first & foremost, the contestation of this doubled & duplicitous term “literature” – & in so doing, to question the assumed standpoint of *comparison* as such, between one notional “corpus” & another.[6] Such a standpoint will always have risked devolving into the singularity of an enstatement: the point-of-view, for example, of a Cartesianism, of an “objective” reason, supervising the divided, yet for this same reason totalisable, “field” of literature. How, then, is it possible to speak of a “comparative literature” without affirming precisely those hegemonic relations that comparativism – by virtue of opening itself to the “other” – might be assumed to scrutinise & critique?[7]

A people with no poetry is a defeated people[8]

When Mahmoud Darwish asked if it is possible for the defeated to possess a poetry of “their own,” he was asking two things: Is it possible for poetry to be separate from the hegemony of the nation state & from the odyssey of an impossible nostalgia (i.e., that poetry must *belong*)? Or is it *only* possible for a poetry that isn't groomed to officiate at the ceremonies of power to exist in a state of “defeat” (of failure, of inadequacy, of redundancy, of insignificance, etc.): a

poetry on the underside of nation-state triumphalism; a poetry under a perpetual state-of-siege? But more: If literature is born in a state of hegemonic relations, ought “poetry” itself be understood more generally as precisely what threatens to *escape* a hegemonic rationale & not merely as what is *excluded* by it? Yet if, merely to exist, poetry must, from the viewpoint of power, be – a priori – defeated, because “mute,” “useless,” “incomprehensible,” unless *called upon to speak*, indentured, as it were, to the glorification of the state, nevertheless the opposite may be more the case: poetry as the quintessential foreigner, the *Geist* or *spectre* haunting the institution of literature?

If, in Plato, poetry is made to appear doubly defeated *in order to speak* – by betraying itself, its own autonomy, its own recusance – what can be said of the very disproportionate array of ideological forces required to affect this “defeatism”?[9] This might indicate that not only does the ideological state apparatus not cover the entire discursive field, but that its spectacle of power (that which it calls “culture”) is phantasmatic. To the extent that power seeks to recuperate the discourses of its others, this recuperative movement, too, may be merely reflexive, hyperbolic, paranoiac: moreover, the very notion of recuperation points to the fact that power is not only open at its borders, but is constantly traversed by what it only nominally limits & subjects.[10] Darwish’s question thus needs to be re-stated: Can there be *only* a defeated poetry?

Let us be clear that when we speak of a “defeat” in this sense, we are speaking of a radicalism: the poetics of defeat, here, is a radical poetics.

But what is it actually possible for a “literary theory” to say about such a radical poetics that does not, in advance, admit defeat?[11] Is “literary theory” in any way equipped to comprehend a radical poetics as anything but an *anecdote*, for example, of social reform or as a *simulation* of insurrectionary force (“avantgardism”)? What must occur to the institution of “literary theory” in order for a radical poetics to be conceivable by it other than in terms of the language of power itself arrayed as if *in opposition*?[12]

A radical poetics cannot begin with a challenge thrown in the face of power by those who are merely impotent, or let us say “defeated”: rather, it begins in the experience of a discrepancy between the grandiose claims of power – under the rubric of Culture, Literature, Identity, & so on – & the very tenuous nature of those institutions themselves: a tenuousness made all the more evident by a compulsive, even paranoiac need to “sublimate” everything that calls them into question.[13]

The real power dynamic of institutionalisation stems from the fact that its adversary is never merely symbolic but poses, in some way, a real threat & must be really defeated. Plato’s exclusion of poetry from the ideal polis isn’t trivial. Poetry is accused of representing unreason itself, & so must be excluded from the philosophical state for the sake of its political & social health, an action which is presented as the epitome of reason. Yet being reasonable, the state also permits poetry to plead its case for re-inclusion, but only in the language of prose. It is the charade of “reasonableness” here that shows the state not as *enlightened* but rather *insufficient*, & while its offer of appeal before the tribunal of reason may appear cynical & opportunistic, it also exposes a certain desperation: reason is not omniscient, instead it is revealed to be an *ideological prophylactic*. This again recalls Darwish’s argument that the

defeated prosper from the prestige of their vanquishers, who it envies; while it is the vanquisher who in turn erects monuments to itself on the basis of the prestige of the vanquished, who it nevertheless despises.

Such tendencies are not artefacts of modernity or of the emergence of what we understand today as nation states: the classical & preclassical worlds are rife with purloined literary corpses, religions, epistemologies, entire plundered cultural edifices often only thinly disguised. Yet this should also alert us to the relativism of this discourse.[14] But something is amiss here if the “poetry of defeat,” which is to say a landless poetry – a poetry of displacement, of exile & unbelonging – is understood purely & simply as a genre of historical resentment: a lament to be rehearsed down the generations until such a time as the tables are turned or fortunes are reversed in some literary Promised Land. Such an immiserated poetry would be little more than the kitsch of disempowerment, just as one may say that the artefacts of “official culture” are the kitsch of power.[15]

Culture is the paranoiac ego of “civilisation”?

“Fighting alienation from totally alienated positions”[16] is how Juan Goytisolo expresses this apparent double-bind in one of his lesser-known works of anti-literature, *Makbara*. [17] Like Darwish, Goytisolo poses questions about a defeated poetry, to which the work itself is the effective response. *Makbara* sets out to affect a travesty of a travesty: “a parody that mirrors in reverse the agitation, the frenzy, the commotion of operations” of the paranoiac corporate-state.[18] Goytisolo's text is grounded in a refusal to accept the terms of “identity” that form the basis of Platonic ideology (that the speaker must identify with the truth s/he speaks, etc.), instead *Makbara* presents a narrator whose situation is constantly elided: “I, the European halaiquí who have told you this story, assuming different voices and roles in turn, making the characters fly from one continent to the other.”[19]

In a 1984 interview with Julio Ortega, Goytisolo observed: “And it’s true that my own birth as a writer coincides in fact with the destruction of my literature, of the literary moulds which in routine fashion I took from tradition.”[20] Goytisolo – whose own “moral, social, ideological & sexual exile” from Franco’s Spain (spent mostly in Tangier & Marrakech) was in large part caused by an increasingly political stance with regard to language *separate from the claims of national/cultural identity* – insisted that “an expatriate lives generally in a state of anguished isolation. But, this very state of marginality is favoured toward the affirmation of his own ideas, liberated in this way from the hypnosis, from the taboos & the blackmail demanded of him by the society in which he lived,” since it is in his discourse that the writer’s identity resides. “The creator of ‘discourse’ changes his voice, & in that manner changes his skin.” And by virtue of being a “mere” linguistic character, as some would say, he becomes “an authentic man without a country.”

As if to say, in order to *write*, first one must become a foreigner, to discover the foreignness that has inhabited them all along. And this perspective, however paradoxical it seems, is only possible *because of a constitutive alienation & estrangement*. In his reflection on this question – *Masks of Identity* (Señas de identidad, published in Mexico City, 1966), *Juan the Landless* (Juan sin tierra, 1975) & *Makbara* (1980; both published in Barcelona) – Goytisolo pursued a new & audacious elaboration on “novelistic” form in the radical tradition of

Cervantes, Joyce & Genet – whose resonances can also be detected among contemporary works like Manuel Puig's *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (1968) & *Pubis Angelical* (1979), Cabrera Infante's *Tres Tristes Tigres* (1971) & *La Habana para un Infante Difunto* (1979), Severo Sarduy's *Cobra* (1972) & *Maitreya* (1978), Hubert Fichte's *Detlevs Imitationen* (1971), Clarence Major's *Reflex & Bone Structure* (1975), Ignácio Brandão's *Zero* (1979) & Reinaldo Arenas's Pentagonia trilogy, among others.

Goytisolo, who viewed the novel as a “cannibalistic form” able, like Pound's “ragbag of history,” to incorporate everything, considered his own writing therefore to be a concerted *treasonous act* against the “conceptual tyranny of genre.” For Goytisolo, such treason wasn't an *acte gratuit*, but a writerly responsibility, accorded through the heterogeneous experience of language, where as to acquiesce to the injunctions of an experientially-deformative “realism” or retreat into unworldly “fictionising” would amount to the worst kind of culpability: the negation of writing. “A writer,” he insisted, “who is unaware of the movements in poetics & linguistics seems to me an anachronism in today's world. The writer can't abandon himself simply to inspiration, & feign innocence vis-à-vis language, because language is never innocent.” An avid reader of Joyce & Sterne in the original, Goytisolo's work stands as a major rebuke to the dogmatic anti-modernism, anti-internationalism & anti-experimentalism of a “globalised” culture industry, whose universality it exposes as a confidence trick: doctrine imposed upon the supposed mental capacities of “newly imported slaves” (as a group of ideologues in *Juan the Landless* characterise it), who are made to toil for this neo-imperial master narrative while performing their “otherness” as literary sub-species.

(“It's absurd,” Goytisolo has said elsewhere, “to make distinctions between national literatures.”)[21]

In *Makbara*, the monotheism of the author-figure is devolved onto the figure of the *halaiquí*, or ritual storyteller, borrowing a Swahili term for “crowd,” derived from Arabic, *ḵalīqa*, “creature, creation.” This authorial narrator is both a “creature” & one who “creates,” whose “name” – per the Book of Mark – is quite literally “legion.” The *halaiquic* can be understood as the antithesis of the singular, of the sacred, of Platonic truth, belonging rather to the heterologous, the transgressive & profane, indeed the *vulgar*. Moreover, the *halaiquí* represents a fundamental *différance* in(to) which the logos does not “fall” but rather by which it is *constituted*.

In such a way, *Makbara* may be read as a Babelian allegory of the paradox which lies at the heart of all comparativism: as both corpus & anti-corpus. The *halaiquí* will not be normalised, methodised, systematised, bound by the “prose of reason.” This criminal body isn't subject to committal, but is that which commits itself, as when Sartre speaks of a “committed literature” – though decidedly not in the manner in which Sartre intended. What would it mean, here, to *commit* literature? To what extent is the situation of Goytisolo's text resonant with that of, say, Genet? And what if the “crime” were precisely in the incapacity of the law – of reason, genre, etc. – to classify it? A perverse textual body irredeemable by virtue of refusing to become *literature*?[22]

What can the status of such a text be within the framework of a literature grounded in the idea of the state? And what happens to the meaning of “comparativism” in the face of such an irreducible “otherness”? This isn't a rhetorical question: like Rimbaud, the work of “disordering”

that is the driving force in Goytisoló's writing is never gratuitous. To Rimbaud's "JE est un autre" Goytisoló adds "je cherche une *orientation*."[23] And if Goytisoló's "I" is a transgendered chaos agent, in whom the concept of orientation is "non-binary," it's linguistic actions are likewise deconstructive, a "disordering of the senses" as a deconstruction of the law of genre, etc. Moreover, this deconstruction remains close to its object, the "high-cultural" artefacts of a bureaucratised "enlightenment" & in particular their didactic, pseudo-naturalism, which within a colonial framework can only appear (beyond the most limited of myopic viewpoints) as a *travesty* of "reasonableness."

Makbara's "irrational" topology designates a zone outside the socio-colonial dichotomies, imbued with "the vitality of a great meltingpot."[24] But Goytisoló's mapping of one vision of a cultural meltingpot onto another (correspondingly alien) one – of the Sahara, for example, onto the Parisian cosmopolis – represents more than a superposition of two conflicting modes of modernity, two comparativisms (one decentred by successive postcolonialisms – Phoenician, Roman, Arab, Portuguese, Spanish, French – the other, the imploded centre of a still-ongoing colonial & neocolonial project whose cultural force has nevertheless migrated into the realm of myth & virtualism; one, constitutively heterogeneous, the other paranoiacally driven to incorporate its "others" so as to maintain, even in the form of self-contradiction, an illusory monopoly on cultural capital[25]). Here, to reprise Darwish's term, are thus also two modes of a poetics of "defeat." Where the "Saharan" emerges from what we might call a topological resistance to hegemony, in its various historical manifestations, the "cosmopolitan" emerges from a crisis within the discourse of history subsumed within a certain *polity* of reason.[26] But if Goytisoló's melting-pot evokes a "disordering,"[27] this is because it signifies a place in which identity[28] – as an ego-psychology of the state (reason) – is dissolved & re-formed "at will": a dissolution & disillusionment which is that of the text itself & not a simple mimesis.[29]

The text does not describe but *inscribes* the "polymorphous perversity" (Freud) of a body, a corpus, that is *constitutively heterogeneous*,[30] traversed by such a multiplicity of styles, genres, languages as to be the very contrary of a "utilitarian prose" of eugenic-statist purism. [31] Because if Darwish & Goytisoló's writing *knows* anything about the institution of literature it is that power, no matter how much it turns a blind eye, desires nothing more – & this, perhaps, is the true meaning of its "perversion" – than to *incorporate* its others, to *travesty* all those aberrant textual bodies that wld otherwise refuse it: to suborn under the pretext of dignifying, as a "literature of others" if not of "otherness" itself – an otherness which henceforth is compelled to whisper the prose of *its othering*, doubly alienated, doubly prophylactised, so that its barbarous syllables may thenceforth be pronounced without calling down a state of catastrophe, without sacrilegious effect, or anything more insurrectionary than a Mona Lisa smile.

Agadir, February 2023

[1] Jacques Rancière, "The Politics of Literature," trans. Julie Rose, *SubStance* 33.1 (2004): 10-24.

[2] Jacques Derrida, "Scribble (writing-power)," trans. Cary Plotkin, *Yale French Studies*, no. 58

(1979): 117–47.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, “Literature and Life,” trans. Daniel W. Smith & Michael A. Greco, *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 2 (1997): 225–30.

[4] The question I begin with is the relation between literature & the state, between a theory of literature & a theory of the state, not one theory or another but a general field of implication that arises from the proximity of these terms, literature & state, & what goes on between & within them, in the space of a “comparison.”

[5] If modernity is characterised by successive dualisms – “schismogeneses” – this may be symptomatic of its relation to that phenomenon of rationalist systematisation that called itself the European enlightenment: an “incomplete project,” to abuse Habermas’ phraseology, because *constitutively incompletionable*. Modernism may simply be – like Gödel’s theorem – the articulation of this incompleteness.

[6] There is another sense of “comparison,” of course, one that implies not a difference between terms but a difference without terms: literature as a differential body through which the terms of its contestations, its institutionalisation, its nationalisation, are in fact brought into being AS AN EFFECT OF LITERATURE, & not vice versa.

[7] A “comparative literature” that is simply a point-of-view from one national corpus onto those of “others” amounts to little more than a reification of the ideology of the state under the guise of pluralism. There is no equivalence between such a pluralism & the polymorphous perversity of texts like *Makbara*. Such a text cannot be “orientated” within the binary relation of a point-of-view directed at foreign objects: its foreignness *is* its orientation, which “infects” any point-of-view adopted with relation to it. Moreover, its foreignness is *cognizant*, in advance, of the “point-of-view” as such, since it itself represents – insofar as it “represents” anything – both the traversal & travesty of the “literary object.” The fascination that it exercises arises from within the very space, or nonspace, from which any comparison must emerge: that is to say, the space of a nonspace.

[8] Mahmoud Darwish, *A State of Siege*, trans. Munir Akash, Daniel Abdal-hayy Moore (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

[9] Recently, a movement in “radical poetics” has once again raised the spectre of defeatedness as a precondition of revolutionary thought & poetic action. One of its points of reference has been the “failed” events of 1968, among others, treated as an “incomplete project” that literature has been complicit in consigning to the dustbin of history. Can this still be discounted as mere romanticism? As a kind of empty neoavantgardism?

[10] A discourse of power that otherwise possesses nothing but the “fact” of itself, an *empty signifier* in an imaginary relation to a fictional *real*.

[11] Can it only be judged against a positivistic diagnosis or programmatic alternative to the present World Order? That is expected to constitute a call to action or instigate responsible change? That would necessarily falter before the spectre of revolutionary violence in the actual overthrow of the state?

[12] How, then, can a radical poetics escape reduction to being just another trope in the dialectics of power itself? The Platonic tactic is to present truth-to-power as *a priori*, & to demonstrate this by a perpetual recuperative movement orientated at overcoming the threat of mystification & obscurantism posed by poetic language. Accepting this proposition means accepting the secondary, dissimulative status of poetry vis-à-vis a “prose of reason” given priority in relation to truth. A radical poetics would imply something entirely other: to begin with, the actual *insufficiency* of any so-called dialectics of power: whose truth is exposed as *conditional upon* the subjugation of poetic language. Which is to say, upon the apparent omnipotence of the “dialectical” procedure – in other words, of recuperation.

[13] The oft-lamented institutionalisation of the avantgarde is just one example of this. Yet it accomplishes relatively little to say that the institutional co-option of the avantgarde, or of a radical poetics, is nothing other than a kind of self-embarrassed effort at pretending to a benevolent yet totalising authority, even when such an attempt may be shown to represent the opposite. If the prestige of the institution rests upon the paradoxical necessity of both enlarging & diminishing the prestige of its erstwhile adversary, this by itself does nothing to subvert the real power of institutionalisation. As Napoleon famously said, power is never ridiculous, no matter how much the powerless may like to say so: the fact that they say so, rather than seize power itself, is as indicative of this state of affairs as anything.

[14] The poetry that Plato’s ideal polity desired to subjugate was that of Homer: whereas, for Darwish, it is the *Iliad* that serves as the source code of a western cultural hegemony transposed, against the background of centuries of pogroms, exile, & the Nazi holocaust, onto the state ideology of modern Israel. And if the Virgil’s *Aeneid* takes the side of Homer’s vanquished, in order to provide a creation myth for Rome, it isn’t to avow a poetics of the defeated, but to underwrite the Augustan imperialist narrative with a historical conceit of historical revenge upon the Greek world – revenge, that is to say, for having predefined its cultural reference points (including the ideology of reason): an Oedipal gesture of recuperation *par excellence* in which “history” is merely an alibi. Whether it is falsified history or not is beside the point, what matters is that subjugation & expropriation are made to appear *just*: pseudo-retribution becomes pseudo-rectification.

[15] It is necessary, therefore, to consider what it must mean for a poetry – in general & not merely in its historical particularities – to be “defeated” in a more fundamental, constitutive sense, as in the constitutive “alienation” of the individual in Marx & Freud, for example, or in Rimbaud. There is a tendency to treat the Rimbaudian formula “JE et une autre” as mere subjective tropism, the romantic self-intoxication of the “outsider” poet, as camouflage for the political impotence bestowed by a society organised along lines of subtle authoritarianism, masquerading by turns as “liberal” & “indifferent.” The glibness of this view is analogous to that of the avantgarde as a marriage of convenience between frustrated communards & the Salon des Refusés. Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* sums this up with the observation that any subversion of the identitarian sub-routines of the state merely risks concretising them, though this is somewhat beside the point. The real business is how such contingencies are employed to serve *post hoc propter hoc* as causalities in the neutralisation of a radical poetics: for example, how the avantgarde in Bürger is held *accountable* for the processes of institutionalisation it critiques.

[16] Juan Goytisolo, *Makbara*, trans. Helen Lane (London: Serpent's Tail 1993) 120.

[17] An unruly assemblage of 16 texts, each characterised by syntactic & grammatical fluidity & superfluity; typographic idiosyncrasies (decapitalisation, enjambment); persistently evasive narrative positions, genders, ethnicities, subjectivities; first-second-third person, singular & plural; monologue, dialogue, polylogue; heterogeneous & impure “genres” suspended between or produced across languages (Spanish, French, Moroccan Arabic, Riff, Tamazight, Tachelhit); polymorphous tropic effects amplified at the level of the so-called schema & vice versa (like the flapping of a butterfly's wing, or the sardonic flutter of a transsexual's overly mascaraed eyelash); polymorphous perversities of those antisocial & unsocialisable aspects of “meaning” that are irreducible to, or irredeemable as, an ideological state apparatus. It goes without saying that *Makbara* is very much aware of the provocation it itself represents to the forces of aesthetic morality, for whom such deviations are “haram.”

[18] *Makbara* 251.

[19] *Makbara* 239.

[20] Published in the Summer 1984 edition of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*.

[21] Juan Goytisolo with J.S. Tennant, “Interview with Juan Goytisolo,” *The White Review* (November 2014): [https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-juan-](https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-juan-goytisolo/)

[goytisolo/](https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-juan-goytisolo/)^[22] Likethe *corps délectable* of the Maghrebi transsexual in chapter 7, wreaking havoc in a Parisian *salon du mariage* (“tu as vu, papa? la dame n’a pas rasé sa barbe!”

[*Makbara* 91] – a punning allusion also to the figure of the “barbarian,” but also the “Berber,” as (both Western & Arab) colonialism's “other(s).”

[23] *Makbara* 98 – emphasis added

[24] *Makbara* 134. This topological involution both produces & subverts a state literature, & which thereby would also define “the state” of literature in general.

[25] The injunction we historically encounter against the translation of sacred texts, contested almost universally (though not synchronously) in the name of the vernacular, ironically becomes the template of a most conventionalised “national corpus,” translated half by race-myth & half by a kind of historical materialism. Yet the work of “comparison” is itself premised upon both the necessity & impossibility of translation, as Derrida says, in contradiction to the sacred, with its singular & divine origin yet also the self-contradictory logistics of its translational prohibition (a truly sacred text would be self-evident, it would speak for itself without any intermediary or interdiction, it would transcend all need or desire for translation, totalised across all possible languages, being nothing less than “sense” itself, etc.). Comparativism thus arises from a hermeneutic paradox.

[26] In short, through a “teleological” crisis of modernity that defines itself by a certain *disillusionment*.

[27] And which can be situated (somewhat arbitrarily) between the Dreyfus case & the Algerian war of independence, or between Realism & the New Novel. This is something about

which much more can obviously be said, but what concerns us here is...

[28] Or as Jacques Lacan punned in his seminar on James Joyce: *père-version*. Which is to say, of *translation... to the father-of-the-logos*. Which is to say, in its Platonic allegorical form, reason. Babel is inverted: the One isn't that which "falls" but which seeks to "rectify" (to "resurrect") in its own image. The "I" that emerges from this resurrection – & *Makbara* ironically refers to those parts of cemeteries used for nocturnal assignations – is nevertheless a "figure" that doesn't resolve into an "identity": the subject remains in a state of linguistic-ontological perversion.

[29] Even as a *mimēsis* of the insufficiency of power.

[30] It is a corpus that by its nature is always already "other" & calls the very existence of a singular "culture" into question. Whether it does so in the name of its own revulsion, perversity, exclusion, defeatedness, criminality – or as a rejection of these pejoratives – is moot.

[31] "I have always advocated: adding, adding and adding cultures and languages instead of literally eliminating them in the name of a pure identity." Juan Goytisolo with Maria-Àngels Roque, "Interview with Juan Goytisolo," *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* (9 August 2010): <https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Interview-with-Juan-Goytisolo.pdf>

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